A

SERMON

Preached before the

QUEEN,

AT

WHITE-HALL,

April VIII. MDCXCII.

BEING THE

FAST-DAY

APPOINTED

By Her Majesty, to implore God's Blessing on their Majesties Persons, and the Prosperity of their Arms both at Land and Sea.

By the Right Reverend Father in God,

SYMON Lord Bishop of ELY.

Published by her Majesties Special Command.

LONDON,

Printed for Ric. Chiswell, at the *Rose* and *Crown* in St. *Paul's* Church-Yard. MDCXCII.

The Bishop of E L Y's

FAST-SERMON

BEFORE THE

QUEEN.

April 5. 1691.

A

SERMON

Preached before the

QUEEN,

AT

WHITE-HALL,

April VIII. MDCXCII.

BEING THE

FAST-DAY

APPOINTED

By Her Majesty, to implore God's Blessing on their Majesties Persons, and the Prosperity of their Arms both at Land and Sea.

By the Right Reverend Father in God,
SYMON Lord Bishop of ELY.

Published by Her Majestie's Special Command.

LONDON,
Printed for Ric. Chiswell, at the *Rose* and *Crown* in St. *Paul's* Church-Yard. MDCXCII.

A

SERMON

Preached before the

QUEEN,

AT

WHITE-HALL,

April VIII. MDCXCII.

BEING THE

FAST-DAY

APPOINTED

By Her Majesty, to implore God's Blessing on their Majesties Persons, and the Prosperity of their Arms both at Land and Sea.

By the Right Reverend Father in God,
SYNON Lord Bishop of ELY.

Published by Her Majesties Special Command.

LONDON

Printed for Bk. Chiswell, at the *Rose* and *Crown* in St. *Paul's*-Church-Yard. MDCXCII.

A8 Pam.
Tr. R.
P314 SP

A

SERMON

Preached before the

QUEEN.

NUMBERS. X. ix.

And if ye go to war in the Land against the enemy that oppresseth you, then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets; and ye shall be remembred before the Lord your God, and ye shall be saved from your enemies.

THE World, we see, is made up of Vicissitudes and Changes; there being *a season for every thing, a time to every purpose under heaven: a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time of war, and a time of peace,* as *Solomon* speaks in *Eccles.* 3. *&c.* One of those doth but make way for the other: the true use of War being to seek a good Peace; and the ill use of Peace being wont to beget a War.

My Text makes mention of both; their *going to War* being supposed in the beginning; and their being *saved from their enemies* and so setled in Peace, being promised in the conclusion of it. For it consists of three Parts.

A Supposition; a Duty; and the success of its performance.

1. The *Supposition* is double: that the *Israelites*, as well as other people might be oppressed by their *Enemies*; and that in this case they might lawfully *go to War* with them.

2. The *Duty* is single, though containing many in it: which is to *blow an alarm with the trumpets.*

3. The *Success* is again double, *to be remembred before God*, and to be *saved from their enemies.*

I.

I shall say little of the first of these; which is as true now as it was then. Unless all the world would become Christians, and those Christians likewise obey the Gospel; there will be such Injustice and Oppression, Violence and Rapine, as will make War necessary for the safety and preservation of those who are innocent.

In an Ill-natur'd, Angry, and Covetous World, we must not expect that all men will be our Friends: and some people love themselves so much, that they have no affection left for their Neighbours. Nay, this very thing makes them hate others, because they love themselves so inordinately: They cannot be their own Friends, they imagine, unless they be other mens Enemies. Their own well-being consists in making others miserable. And they never think themselves to have Riches, Honour, Dominion and Greatness enough; if there remains any of these to their Neighbours.

Now what greater service can be done to these ravenous Oppressors, than to broach such a welcome Doctrine as this; that the hands of good Christians are so tyed up by their Religion, that they may not oppose their Ambition, Rapin and Cruelty by force of Arms? nor demand reparations

tions by that way, when all other fairer means are ineffectual, for all the damages they have sustained, and are likely, without remedy, to endure forever.

A fancy so absurd, that I do not think it worth the Confutation. But shall only note, that the *Israelites* extended this liberty, of going to War, which the Law gave them, a great deal too far; as Christians since have been apt to do. For they did not confine it to their necessary defence, or seeking redress of wrongs, and the casing themselves of the burden of Oppressors; but there being two sorts of War which they managed, one *by the Divine Commandment* (which was only against the seven Nations in the Land of *Canaan*, whom God for their abominable wickedness had doomed to utter destruction, and made the Israelites the Executioners of his Vengeance) the other *at their own choice*, against any other people, as occasion should require: their Doctors fancied it a sufficient reason for this later sort of War upon their Neighbours; merely to advance the Glory and Dominion, the Empire and Majesty of Israel (as their phrase is) though they had done them no manner of injury. *V. Seld. de Jure. Nat. L. V. c. 12.*

Which is the very notion, by which the Grand Oppressor of this Age governs himself, and justifies his Wars. But the antient Christian Doctors, have taught us better than those old Masters in Israel, or the new Christian Politicians. Among whom St. *Austin* fears not to call such a War, *Grande Latrocinium* a greater sort of Robbery, *a publick Burglary* (as I may call it in the language of our Law) which is so much the more Villanous, because committed by Authority. Nay, it is an ancient Tradition recorded by *Eusebius*, *Epiphanius*, * and others, who received it from the East, that when *Noah* divided the Earth among his Sons and Nephews, he bound them *L. IV. de Civ. Dei Cap. 6.*

* *In Ancorato.*

by

by an Oath, not to Covet, nor invade each others Territories: and whosoever transgressed the Law of this Oath, was solemnly cursed, by the very words of it, with all his Posterity, to utter Perdition.

These were the old principles of Religion (unto which blessed be God, their present Majesties closely adhere) that Wars are not to be undertaken, but for the defence or the recovery of our rights.

II.

In which case, there was a duty incumbent upon the old *Israelites* before they began the War; which shall be the Principal Subject of my Discourse, together with the Success or Fruit of it, when Religiously performed. It was, to *blow an alarm with the trumpets*: which is the only phrase in my Text, that hath any difficulty in it, and must be explained a little, before any useful Instruction can be drawn from it.

You read in the beginning of this Chapter, that God commanded *two Silver Trumpets* to be made, which served for two uses: *for the calling together of the Assembly, and for the journeying of the Camps*, as the words are *v.* 2. When they did *merely blow* with them; that is, with a long, continued, equal breath, then they were to understand that the Assembly was summoned to meet together. In which there was this difference, that if they heard them *both* blow, then all the Congregation was to assemble; if *one* only, then the Heads or Captains alone of the thousands of Israel were to gather themselves to *Moses* at the door of the Tabernacle, as you read, *v.* 3, 4. If they did not merely blow, but *blow an alarm*, that is, with a short, concise, and interrupted breath, not continuing the sound, but often breaking

it;

it; then it was for the journeying of the Camps, as you read *v.* 5, 6.

So here was a *Civil*, and a *Military* use of them: Besides which, there was also a *Religious*. Which was twofold likewise; either to give notice of a *Fast*, or to give notice of a *Feast*: to call them together to pray and humble themselves before God; or to excite them to rejoyce in his praise, and giving him thanks.

Of their sounding for a *Fast* you read II. *Joel* 15. *Blow the Trumpet in Sion, sanctifie a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the people*, &c. And in the like terms the Psalmist proclaims a *Festival* LXXXI. *Ps.* 3. *Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day; For this was a statute for Israel*, &c. The like you read XCVIII. *Ps.* 6. And thus my Text and the following words are to be understood; if we will follow the interpretation of the best of the *Hebrews*, who vouch it to be the sense of the Eldest times. For if *blowing the trumpets* here were not for a *Religious* purpose, how could the effect of it be, God's *remembring them*, so as to *save them* from their Enemies? Could the bare sounding with them procure such a blessing? Without doubt there was something more in it, to which God makes such a gracious promise. And therefore though *Moses* speaks here of *blowing an alarm* (because it concern'd the Souldiery) yet the *Hebrews* understand thereby, the calling all together unto a Fast; that they might humble themselves before God, and seek his face (*i.e.* his favour) when they were forced to betake themselves to their Arms; and appeal to Heaven, for the deciding, by this means, the controversie between them and their Enemies.

And then in the beginning of the next verse, when he adds *in the days of your gladness* ye shall blow with the Trumpets, some of them understand that Clause, of

their thanksgiving to God for Victory over their Enemies. Which was as reasonable, as their sounding *upon their other solemn days, and in the beginning of their months, and over their burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of their peace-offerings*; which are there likewise mentioned. As they were to *blow with the trumpets*; proclaim a Fast, that is, when they went to War: So they were to blow with them again, when the War was happily ended; that is, proclaim their thankfulness to God, for giving them such success as they desired.

This exposition I shall follow, which makes these words, you see, an injunction to the *Israelites* for solemn fasting; before they took in hand so weighty an Affair, as making War upon their Enemies. For which end we are now here assembled: and I pray God we may perform this duty according to the full intent and meaning of this Injunction. For then we may hope God will remember us in the day of Battle, and Crown our Arms with such success against our injurious Neighbours, as he promised to the *Israelites* against their Enemies.

Now by *solemn fasting*, you all know, is meant the setting some day a part for this purpose: which was always of two sorts. One *private*, which pious people enjoyned themselves of their own accord, with respect either to their own particular, or to the common concerns: of both which we have examples in Scripture. The other was *Publick* enjoyned by the supreme Authority: and those either *stated and ordinary*, at certain times of the year (of which we find only *one* enjoyned by God, in XVI. *Lev.* but *four* more enjoyned by the Elders during their Captivity in *Babylon* VIII. *Zech.* 19.) or extraordinary and unfixed, in time of some imminent danger or great distress: of which we have many examples, not only in Scripture, but also in Ecclesiastical Story.

2 Sam. 12. 16. IX. Dan. 3.

Tertul. de Jejuniis.

XX. *Judg.* 26. 2 *Chron.* XX. 3. VIII. *Ezra.* Of

Of such a *Publick* Fast, and of this latter sort, my Text speaks. For the *blowing with the trumpets*, signified the calling all the people together, as appears by the place before named in the Prophet *Joel*, V. 16. *Gather the people, sanctifie the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children and those that suck the breasts*, &c. All were to appear before God, to Implore his Compassion, by their Cryes and Tears. May *before God*, because they were to be gathered together at the *Tabernacle* while it was standing, and afterwards at the *Temple*. Which is the reason of that expression XXXVI. *Jerem.* 9. *Proclaim a fast before the Lord, to all the people of Jerusalem*: That is, at the Temple; where his Majesty dwelt, and where they came together for Religious Worship. And accordingly he bids *Baruch*, *v.* 6. to *go and read the words of the* LORD *in the ears of the people, in the Lords house, upon the fasting day*. After which example, we are all here now assembled before the Lord, in the place of his Worship and Service. And that we may understand what our business is, I shall as briefly as I can shew you, *First*, what the Scripture means by *fasting before the Lord*; and consequently what will obtain his Blessing upon our Forces: *Secondly*, how fit and necessary it is, at such a time as this, to imploy our selves in this holy duty.

I. Now the word *Fasting* in its ordinary signification imports no more than abstinence from all sorts of Food, for such a time as was appointed to that purpose. But being designed for a religious end, they used it, no doubt, as a *Token* and a sort of *Confession*, that they were not worthy of the common supports and comforts of life, not so much as of a bit of Bread, and consequently not worthy to live. They intended also thereby to *afflict their Souls*, as the Scripture speaks, to put themselves, if not to trouble and pain, yet into a state of Sadness and Mourning; as

a juſt chaſtiſement for their ſinful pleaſures. For which reaſon, the *Jews* underſtand by ſolemn faſting a great deal more than it literally expreſſes; *viz.* not only abſtinence from all manner of refreſhment, by ſo much as waſhing their Faces, or any thing of that Nature; but *putting on ſackcloath* next their Skin (on ſome great occaſions eſpecially) *lying in Aſhes, rending their Garments*, and ſuch like acts of Humiliation.

But we ſhall be very much miſtaken, if we think this was the whole buſineſs of a faſting day, to deny themſelves the comforts and refreſhments of Nature. There was ſomething more, and more excellent, in it; and that which was properly the worſhip of God: which mere abſtinence from food is not. And therefore,

II. The intention of ſuch a day was, to make ſolemn addreſſes to the Almighty, by *Prayer* and *Supplication*: which is frequently joyned with faſting; and, when any bleſſing was obtained, never ſeparated from it. I could direct you to a multitude of places both in the Old Teſtament and the New, and the Apocryphal Books *, alſo, to this purpoſe: but a few may ſuffice. In the Chapter now read, for the firſt Leſſon; 2 *Chron.* XX. 3. you find that when news was brought to *Jehoſephat* of an invaſion by a great multitude of ſeveral Nations, *He feared and ſet himſelf to ſeek the Lord, and proclaimed a faſt throughout all Judah.* This was ſo much the buſineſs of ſuch a day, that the Prophet *Jeremiah* ſpeaks as if it was the thing for which faſting was immediately deſigned. XIV. 12. *When they faſt, I will not hear their cry.* He doth not ſay he would not regard their faſting; but give no Audience to their Prayers: Which, it appears by this, was a great part of the imployment of ſuch a day. And therefore when the Prophet *Joel* had called

* XII. Tobit 4. IV. Judith 9. 10. & 6. VI. Judith 21.

led upon them to blow the trumpet, proclaim a Fast, gather all together, Elders and People, great and small (in the place before mentioned:) he subjoyns these words v. 17. to shew what it was for: *Let the Priests, the Ministers of the Lord, weep between the Porch and the Altar, and let them say; Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: Wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?* For that purpose we are now assembled on this fasting day, to put up our humble and fervent Petitions unto the Divine Majesty; to cry earnestly to him for his Grace and Mercy; for his help and assistance; for good success of our Forces by Sea and Land; for a blessing upon our selves and upon this whole Kingdom.

A very great work! A most weighty employment! For which we had need seriously enquire, whether we be well prepared. Are we fit to appear before the Lord of Heaven and Earth? To be intercessors for a whole Nation? To bespeak his favour in those great affairs that are on foot among us, and in the neighbouring world? Can such as we hope to prevail for a gracious Audience, of such important suits? May we not rather fear that he should hide his face from such obstinate sinners? That he *should cover himself with a cloud* (as *Jeremy* speaks in his *Lamentations* III. 44.) *that our prayer should not pass through*? and that he should turn away from us, when we spread before him our necessities or dangers, and implore his pity on us?

Let us inquire, and make a diligent search into our hearts, whether we have not brought something along with us into his presence, which may obstruct the passage of our Prayers to the Throne of Grace, and render them ineffectual. Which leads me to the third thing.

III. On

III. On their fasting days, every man, who hoped for acceptance with God, was bound to search and try his ways; to enter into the very secrets of his Soul, and see what he could find there displeasing unto God: which might cry louder for Vengeance, than his Prayers could do for Mercy.

For which end their iniquities were declared and set in order before them, by the Prophets (if there were any) and those that instructed them. So we read that *Jeremiah* sent *Baruch* (in the place before named) *to read the words of the* LORD *in the peoples ears, on the fasting day.* And this charge is given to the Prophet *Isaiah* (as you will hear in the first Lesson appointed at Even Prayer, LVIII. *Isai.* 1.) *Cry aloud and spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins.* When you have considered the Chapter, you will find he speaks of the day of the great Fast (which was a *Sabbath of rest to them*, on which they were to *afflict their souls*, XVI. *Levit.* 30, 31.) upon which he was to imitate the *Trumpet*, which had called them together, to sound a new *Alarm* in their ears, to rouse them from their security, to awaken them to a sight of their sins, and move their Hearts to set themselves against them, with all their might. And of what sins doth he admonish them? In the first place, he takes notice of their vain pretences to Religion. For though they *sought God daily*, and heard the Law, and observed the Ordinances of Divine Worship, yea, *took delight in approaching to God* (as you read v. 2.) yet they continued in their open disobedience to the rest of his commands. For they were notoriously unjust: Nay, many miserable Souls proclaimed their unmerciful Dealing and Cruelty. They were full of Strife and Debate, Hatred and Contention: And so given over to voluptu-

ousnes,

ouſneſs, that on the very day of their Faſt *they found pleaſure*, as well as *exacted all their labours* (v. 3, 4.) and could not forbear to ſpeak evil one of another, when they were all confeſſing their Sins to God. *Their hands were defiled with blood, and their fingers with iniquity; their lips ſpoke lies, and their tongue uttered perverſneſs*, &c. as you may read in the reſt of the Chapter, and in that which follows.

These Sins therefore the Prophet proclaimed in their Ears, with a loud voice; and told them it was in vain to Faſt and Pray, while theſe Iniquities continued, and *ſeparated between them and their God*; *ſo that he hid his face from them, and would not hear*, LIX. 2. And do not our iniquities, in like manner, *teſtifie to our faces* (as another Prophet ſpeaks, v. *Hoſ.* 5.) that is, Are they not notorious, though we ſhould ſeal up our Lips, and ſay nothing of them? Nay, ſearch and examine, I beſeech you, whether we be not worſe than they? Do we *ſeek the Lord daily*? Dare we affirm this of our Lives, which the Prophet acknowledges they did? Do we *delight to know his ways, as a Nation that doth righteouſneſs, and forſakes not the Ordinances of their God*? Can we ſay (as he confeſſes of them) *that we aſk of him the Ordinances of Juſtice, and take delight in approaching unto God*? Alas, alas! theſe, I fear, are not become National Vertues: but too many of us are like that People in *Malachi*'s time, who ſaid of the Divine Service, *What a wearineſs is it*? What a burden is ſuch a Day as this to us? And what great numbers, may we juſtly fear, are now wallowing in their Sins, when they ſhould be rather humbling themſelves before God, in Duſt and Aſhes?

But let us ſuppoſe better things; that we are a People, who

who do not *forsake the Ordinances of their God*: Yet, Can we say that our Religion hath made a general Reformation of our Lives? How often have *we approached unto God*, and become no liker to him? How many Fasts have we observed, and forsaken no one Sin? Are we not still as unjust and uncharitable, as those that know not God? Or, Are we not lovers of Pleasure, more than lovers of God? Oh this love of Pleasure, How easily doth it bewitch Mens Hearts, and draw them from their Duty? Idleness and Sports are apt to swallow up the most of their time. Besides, the Gluttony and Drunkenness, the Filthiness and Uncleanness, that are wont to attend upon a negligent and careless Life: The Quarrels also, and Contentions; nay, the Blood-shed and Murders, which they many times commit; when they are crossed in their Sinful Pleasures, or contradicted in their Drunken Humours. And what shall I say of the Oaths and Blasphemies, where-with such Mens Mouths are too often filled? And, there is still a worse thing behind, which is, *putting forth of the finger, and speaking of vanity*, mentioned by the Prophet, v. 9. which seems to denote that there were *Scoffers*, and *open Mockers* among them: whose insolent boldness, when it proceeds to derision of Religion, jearing at holy things, and playing even with the Word of God it self; it is the heighth of impiety, the filling upof a Peoples iniquity.

There is no Prophet now among us, who can confidently charge these Crimes upon this Nation; or tell us how far it is guilty of them: But if they abound every where, they will certainly render our Sacrifices unacceptable unto God. And therefore let every one descend into his own Breast, and make a strict Inquisition there, into the state of his own Soul; and when he is acquainted with it,

IV. The

IV. The next thing in a *Faſt to the* LORD is ingenuouſly to confeſs and ſorrowfully bewail, in the bitterneſs of our Souls, thoſe ſins of which we find our ſelves guilty. An example of which you meet withall in the days of *Samuel*, who, in a great deſtreſs, gathered all *Iſrael* to *Mizpeh*, where they *drew water and powred it out before the* LORD, *and faſted on that day, and ſaid there, We have ſinned againſt the* LORD. But I cannot ſtand to open that place, and many more in the books of *Ezra*, *Nehemiah* and *Daniel*, which relate to this matter: becauſe there is ſomething further and more conſiderable, which requires my care to explain, and preſs upon your hearts.

V. And that is a ſincere purpoſe of forſaking our Sins, and reforming our Lives according to God's holy Word: Which muſt accompany all the foregoing acts of Religion, to make them effectual. For to what end do we examine our ſelves, unleſs it be to correct and amend whatſoever we find to be amiſs? It is an unprofitable labour, to confeſs and bewail what is paſt, unleſs it move us to do better for the time to come. Nay, to pray to God for mercy, while we continue to provoke him to anger by our tranſgreſſions, is a perfect contradiction: and accounted by him no better than a piece of groſs hypocriſie. Which the Pſalmiſt calls, *flattering him with our mouth*; pretending that fear and reverence of him which is not truly ſetled in our heart. Therefore ſee what he replies to this people, when they cryed to him ſaying, *Thou*, O LORD, *art in the midſt of us, and we are called by thy name; leave us not.* (XIV. Jerem. 9.) *Thus ſaith the* LORD *unto this people, thus have*

they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet; therefore the LORD *doth not accept them, he will now remember their iniquities, and viſit their ſins. Then ſaid the* LORD *unto me, Pray not for this people for their good: when they faſt I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offerings and an oblation, I will not accept them,* &c. *v.* 10. 11, 12.

When there was no true repentance, and reſolution to turn from their evil ways; you ſee the Prayers of the Prophet himſelf were of as little avail for their ſafety, as their own Prayers and Sacrifices which they offered to him. And more than this, he expected their holy purpoſes ſhould be performed: and that they ſhould not content themſelves with good reſolutions; which many times are as ſoon broken, as they are made. When the people therefore, in their diſtreſs, *lamented after the Lord*, the good man tells them (1 *Sam.* VII. 2, 3.) *if you do return to the* LORD *with all your heart then put away the ſtrange Gods, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, to ſerve him only: and he will deliver you.* That is, Let us ſee the proof of your unfeigned ſorrow for what you have done amiſs: let your fair promiſes and good purpoſes bring forth fruit meet for repentance: And accordingly you read, *v.* 4. *Then the children of Iſrael put away Baalim and Aſhtaroth; and ſerved the* LORD *only*: *i. e.* they did according to their reſolutions.

But one place may ſerve inſtead of a great many, XXXIII. *Ezek.* 3. 6. where the Watchman is commanded to *blow the trumpet, and warn the people when he ſaw the ſword coming.* What was this, but to call them to Faſting and Humiliation; to Repentace and forſaking their Sins? So you find it explained

plained *v.* 7. 8. (as you may read at your leiſure) and obſerve how the Prophet is directed to treat with them in theſe terms, *v.* 11. *Say unto them, as I live, ſaith the LORD God, I have no pleaſure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O houſe of Iſrael?* This converſion from their evil ways, was the only means to ſave them: to which therefore the Prophet moſt earneſtly importunes them.

And thus *Maimonides*, a moſt learned Writer among the *Jews*, deſcribes one of their faſting-days, in his Treatiſe upon this Subject *. 'An Elder, ſaith he, is 'appointed, who ſtands and calls upon the people to 'turn unto the Lord; ſpeaking to this purpoſe. O 'my Brethren, it is neither your faſting, nor your 'Sackcloth, nor your Aſhes, which will be able to 'turn away the anger of God from you: but your Re-'pentance and good works muſt enſue, to do the 'buſineſs. Do you not find it ſo in the caſe of *Ni-'neveh*? How do you read in their ſtory? Look in-'to the Book of *Jonah*, and obſerve how they proclai-'med a Faſt, and put on Sackcloth, from the greateſt 'to the leaſt III. 5. And the King cauſed it to be 'proclaimed throughout the City, ſaying, *Let neither 'man nor beaſt taſte any food, let them be covered with 'ſackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them 'turn every one from his evil way, and from the vio-'lence that is in their hands.* v. 7, 8. And what the 'effect was, you may find, *v.* 10. *God ſaw their works, 'and that they returned from their evil ways, and God re-'pented of the evil*, &c. Obſerve, Brethren, he doth 'not ſay that he ſaw their Sackcloth, and took notice 'of their Faſting, but that *he ſaw their works, and that 'they returned from their evil ways.* And ſo God ſpeaks

* *In Taanijoth. cap.* 4.

'by the Prophet *Joel*, *Turn ye unto me with all your* 'heart, *and with faſting, weeping, and mourning. Rend* 'your hearts and not your garments; *and turn unto the* 'LORD *your God; for he is gracious, who knows if he* 'will return, *and leave a bleſſing behind him.*

This, ſaith *Maimonides*, the Elder was required to ſpeak with all his might; that he might humble their hearts, and turn them with a perfect Repentance. And after they had thus ſpent the Day in Prayer, hearing the word of God, and other Duties (which I ſhall mention in the next particular) all the People, he ſays, were wont to go into the Burying place; and there they wept and prayed again. And one ſpake to them in this manner; 'Behold, ye ſhall all die and 'periſh, like thoſe whoſe Graves here lie before you; 'unleſs you be converted from your evil ways. Which is much what ſuch a ſaying, as that of our Bleſſed Saviour's in the Goſpel for this day, XIII. Luk. 3. 5. *Except ye repent, ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh.*

You ſee then, what is the great work of this day: Wherein no Exhortation is more proper, than that of *Jeremiah* to this People in his *Lamentations*, III. 40. *Let us ſearch and try our ways, and turn again unto the* LORD. Do not preſume of mercy without this; though you ſhould perform all the other. But fear rather, leſt that ſhould be verified in us, which was ſaid to the *Jews*, I. Iſa. 15. *When you ſpread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; when you make many Prayers, I will not hear you.* A very lamentable caſe! to loſe the favour of God, and all this labour likewiſe to obtain it. What ſhould they do then? What courſe would God have them take? He informs them, in the very next words, *Waſh ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine Eyes,*

ceaſe

ceaſe to do evil, learn to do well, ſeek judgment, relieve the oppreſſed, judge the fatherleſs, plead for the widow. Come now and let us reaſon together, ſaith the LORD (now I am willing to be reconciled) *though your ſins be as ſcarlet, they ſhall be as white as ſnow*, &c.

From which words I am directed to another neceſſary part of a Solemn Faſt, which is the laſt I ſhall mention.

VI. And that is, doing publick Juſtice upon Notorious Offenders, by inflicting thoſe Puniſhments upon Vice and Wickedneſs, which the Law requires. *Judge the Fatherleſs*: The Prophet ſpeaks to the Rulers and Governors of the People, that they ſhould ſee right done, and Abuſes corrected. And accordingly you find, that upon their Days of Humiliation, this was a conſiderable part of their care. For when *Samuel*, gathered all the People to *Mizpeh*, where they kept a Faſt (as I ſhowed before) and confeſſed their ſins, &c. the Day concluded with this, 1 Sam. VII. 6. *And Samuel judged the children of Iſrael in Mizpeh.* When *Ezra*, in like manner, *mourned and did neither eat bread, nor drink water*, he ſummoned all the People to come to *Jeruſalem*, upon pain of forfeiting all their Goods, if they did not; and when they appeared, he examined who had taken ſtrange Wives contrary to the Law; and he cauſed them to be put away; as you read X. *Ezra* 6, 7, &c.

And thus *Maimonides* tells us, in aftertimes their manner was, upon their Faſting Days occaſioned by any Publick Trouble, for the *Houſe of Judgment* (as their Phraſe is) 'to ſit in the Synagogue of every City, and there examine the Lives of the Citizens, after Morning Prayer until Noon: And ſo they remo- *Ib. Cap. 1.*

'ved,

'ved, ſaith he, the Stumbling-blocks of Tranſgreſſion. 'They inquired, for inſtance, after the *Men of Vio-* 'lence; thoſe who had been Extortioners and Oppreſ- 'ſors of others, whom they Excommunicated: They 'ſought after the *Scorners* and thoſe that deſpiſed the 'Law, whom they humbled; with all the like Of- 'fenders. And then from the middle of the Day till '*three* a Clock, they recited the Bleſſings and 'Curſes that are in the Law; according to what the 'Wiſe Man ſays, *My Son, deſpiſe thou not the Chaſtening 'of the* LORD. III. Prov. 11. And then, having read 'ſuch Reproofs out of the Prophets, as were moſt 'ſuitable to the preſent ſtrait wherein they were; 'Evening Prayer began; in which they ſpent the re- 'maining part of the day, crying unto God with all 'their might.

This certainly very much concerns all the Magiſtrates and Officers of Juſtice among us in this Kingdom: Who ſhould bluſh to be found more remiſs than thoſe who lived under a lower Diſcipline. I wiſh I could lift up my Voice, and ſpeak ſo loud, as to awaken every one of them, to chaſtiſe all Publick Offenders; to do Juſtice ſtrictly upon thoſe who diſhonour God, and are a Scandal to Religion. Stir up yourſelves, and be *Zealous for your God* (as the Scripture ſpeaks) Let not the Drunkards, the Blaſphemers, the Prophaners of the Lord's-Day, who deſpiſe his Worſhip and Service, go unpuniſhed. See good order kept in all Houſes of Publick Entertainment. Find out and ſuppreſs all places of noted Uncleanneſs. Make a ſtrict Inquiſition after falſe Weights and deceitful Meaſures. Diſcountenance Make-bates, and ſowers of Diſcord among Brethren. And execute the ſeverity of the Law againſt all open wickedneſs.

This

This would be indeed to keep a *Faſt unto the LORD.* This would be the ready way to make us an happy People. For though there might ſtill be a great many ſins committed among us: Yet they would not be National ſins, nor be imputed to us as the guilt of the Kingdom; but every Man ſhould bear his own Iniquity. Whereas, without ſuch Reformation as this, or an hearty and honeſt endeavour after it, our Faſtings, and Prayers, and Lamentations, will ſerve only for marks of our inſincerity, and of the mean Opinion we have of God: As if he could be moved with ſuch Services; wherein we have reſpect only to our ſelves, and not at all to him. Who is not honoured, while Prophane Wickedneſs openly appears, to the high affront of Piety and Religion, without check or Controulment.

This bold Commiſſion of Sin without Correction, He will account the Sin of the Kingdom: And it will lie more eſpecially at the door of the Magiſtrates and Officers of Juſtice; if they can, and yet will not redreſs ſuch Impieties. For it was always an acknowledged Rule, That *he who doth not forbid ſin when it is in his power, doth in effect command it: and he that doth not puniſh it when it is in his power, incourages and upholds it.*

As we expect then the Bleſſing of Heaven upon us; as we wiſh the happineſs of theſe Kingdoms, and deſire that the great deſigns which are now on foot may thrive and proſper; let us every one, in our ſeveral Conditions, Relations, and Places, ſet our ſelves ſeriouſly againſt Vice and Wickedneſs, and labour to root it out. For not only our Eternal, but our Temporal Intereſt is concerned in this, as I ſhall now endeavour briefly to demonſtrate; by ſhowing how rational

tional and neceſſary it is, to perform this Duty, of which I have been treating; in the full extent thereof.

That, you may remember, was the *Second* thing which I undertook to do; when I entred upon this part of my Text. And I ſhall not preſs you by *general* Reaſons, but ſuch only as *particularly* relate to thoſe who are in a State of War. Who ought to conſider in the *Firſt* place,

I. That as Faſting and Prayer are an open acknowledgment that God is the Soveraign Diſpoſer of all Events, ſo it is never more neceſſary to make this acknowledgment than in a time of War: when his Overruling Power and Wiſdom is moſt eminently apparent. For it hath been frequently ſeen, that a little Chance, as we call it, hath diſordered mighty Armies: A ſmall Accident hath turned the fortune of the Day. The miſtaking of a word in Fights at Land; the ſhifting of the Wind in Fights at Sea, or ſome ſuch like ſingle event; hath ſometimes raviſhed Victory from thoſe, who had it juſt in their hands. There are innumerable inſtances in Story, of ſuch ſudden Contingencies; as have utterly defeated the faireſt hopes. We have one, in the *firſt Leſſon* for this Days Morning Prayer; where we read how *three* Nations that were combined againſt *Jehoſaphat*, by a miſtake of a Party of them, who were laid in ambuſh, fell upon one another, and were utterly deſtroyed by their own hands, 2 *Chron.* XX. 22, 23. Which is to be aſcribed to the ſecret interpoſition of the Divine Power, which governs all things, both great and ſmall: And by very little things, produces very great alterations.

The

The skill and prudence of thoſe that Command in Battles may do much; the Courage of the Soldiers is of great moment; the ſtrength and number of Ships is very conſiderable. But (as one of the Heathens ſpeaks) one ſingle chance; that is (in the Chriſtian Language) one turn of the Divine Providence can do more than them all.

Thus far then, Bleſſed be God, we are in the right; the very appointment of ſuch an Aſſembly as this, being a publick acknowledgment which their *Majeſties* make, that there *is a mind* (to uſe the words of *Plato*) an eternal mind, *which is the King of Heaven and Earth*; governing and ordering all things every where: And our meeting together, at this time, being a ſolemn Recognition of that Supreme Authority and Providence of his. Whereby we declare our ſenſe of humane weakneſs, though never ſo well armed and bravely appointed: And diſclaiming all confidence in the arm of fleſh, teſtify to the World that we hope not for Salvation from thence; but from the living God, whoſe favour is at all times to be moſt humbly implored; but then eſpecially, when not only Men, but the Wind and the Seas, Storms and Tempeſts; nay, all other things, may riſe up againſt us. And we ought further to conſider that,

ὡς νῦς ὅστι βασιλεὺς οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς.

II. Our Faſting and Prayers, being an acknowledgment, likewiſe, of the Obedience we owe to Almighty God in all things; there can be nothing of more dangerous Conſequence, than to perſiſt in our Rebellion againſt him; after we have made ſuch open Confeſſions of his Supremacy, and of our dependance on him, and the need, in which we ſtand of his favour and help. Upon which account, we ought to take care that theſe

Religious Addreſſes to him, be attended with ſuch a Reformation, as I have now mentioned, before we venture to engage with our Enemies. That ſo we may have no more Enemies, than they to oppoſe us: But we may be in peace with Heaven, when Men make War upon us. For he is in a bad condition, who hath a great many Enemies, to deal with all at one time: And he in a worſe, who carries a ſecret Enemy along with him in his Armies; as all thoſe do who go in their ſins, to fight with their Oppoſers. And thence it follows; that none are in ſo dangerous a condition as thoſe, who have God for their Enemy: Who threatens to *wound the head of his Enemies; of ſuch an one as goeth on ſtill in his treſpaſſes*, LXVIII. *Pſal.* 21. But never are they in more danger than when by their Prayer and Faſting the Devil is not caſt out; but they ſtill reſolutely perſiſt in their Diſobedience.

Before we blow the Trumpet then of War againſt our Enemies; we ought in all reaſon to proclaim War againſt our Sins. It is our higheſt intereſt, to call up all the Forces of our Souls (if I may ſo ſpeak) to encounter theſe, and tread them down under our Feet: before we take the confidence to look out other Foes, who are not ſo deadly, in the Face. There is a peculiar Precept of God by *Moſes* belonging to this matter, which ought to be often pondered. XXIII. *Deut.* 9. *When the hoſt goeth forth againſt thine Enemies, then keep thee from every wicked thing.*

III. By which means we ſhall be diſpoſed to manage all other Wars, after a Chriſtian manner. We ſhall not commit any injuſtice or violence when we go to redreſs it: nor exerciſe Cruelty, when we take in hand to puniſh it. We ſhall never be guilty of that,

of

of which we complain: but fight like thoſe, that hate fighting. We ſhall love even our bitterest Enemies; and wiſh we could conquer them by that weapon, rather than any other. But if that cannot be, we ſhall be able, however, which is the next thing conſiderable,

IV. To place a good hope in God, that he will take our part, and ſend us Auxiliaries from Heaven, when men riſe up againſt us. *The race is not to the ſwift, nor the battle to the ſtrong*, &c. (as the wiſe man obſerves IX. *Eccleſ.* II.) *but time and chance happeneth to them all.* It is God only, as you have heard, that can make opportunities favourable to us, and cauſe things to fall out advantageouſly on our ſide; yea, make little means bring mighty things to paſs: And we may hope he will do ſo, when *in all our ways we acknowledge him*, and live as becomes thoſe who believe, that let us *deviſe* what we pleaſe, it is the LORD who *directs* and orders the ſucceſs. XVI. *Prov.* 9. XX. 24.

V. And then to him we ſhall not fail to give all the praiſe, and aſcribe nothing to our ſelves: as that admirable Prince *David* doth; who after all his wonderful atchieyements makes the moſt humble acknowledgments to God, in the laſt of thoſe Pſalms now read, XLIV. 1, 2, &c. *Bleſſed be the LORD my ſtrength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight. My goodneſs, and my fortreſs, my high towre, and my deliverer, my ſhield* (obſerve how many words he uſes to expreſs his ſenſe that he owed all to God) *and he in whom I truſt: Who ſubdueth my people under me. LORD, what is man that thou takeſt knowledge of him? Or the Son of man, that thou makeſt account of him? Man is like to vanity: his days are as a ſhadow that paſſeth away.* As

if he had ſaid, 'LORD, what am I? what is the beſt or 'greateſt of men, that ſuch things ſhould be effected by 'them, as the ſubduing ſo many people, as have ſub-'mitted unto me. Alas! we are but *vanity*; a mere '*ſhaddow*: and what can a whole Army of ſhadows 'do, without the power of God. Unto which I muſt 'and do aſcribe intirely all the victories which have 'been won over great and ſtrong Nations, by ſuch a 'feeble creature as I am. And thus *Jonathan* a Friend of *David*'s ſpeaks to his Armour-bearer 1 *Sam.* XIV. 6. *Let us go over unto the Garriſon of theſe uncircumciſed; it may be the* LORD *will work by us. For there is no reſtraint to the* LORD *to ſave by many, or by few.*

VI. With him therefore if we can make friendſhip, by abandoning all his Enemies, it is viſible that this good hope in God, will inſpire us with true Valour, and make us fear nothing inordinately; no, not death it ſelf. *The righteous*, ſays *Solomon*, *are as bold as a Lyon*, XXVIII. *Prov.* 1. they can look dangers undauntedly in the Face. Whereas, all the natural courage and boldneſs, which abundance of natural ſpirits, in a vigorous conſtitution of Body and Health, may indue ſome men withall, will grow faint and languiſh; whenſoever the terrors of an evil Conſcience ſeize upon them, and their guilt ſtarts up and ſtares them in the face. If a wicked man chance to reflect upon this one thing alone, that he is iſſued forth into the field of danger without God (more confident in his own ſtrength, than in the Power of the Almighty, whom he doth not ſeriouſly acknowledge, nor ſtudy to ingage) it will amaze his ſpirit, and quench his courage. This will daunt him more, than all the Enemies in the World: and ſtrike a greater terror into him, than the noiſe of Cannon, and the ſhrieks and groans of dying men. And what man on Earth

Earth is there, ſo reſolute and confident, ſo high ſpirited and a deſpiſer of danger, as to be able to ſecure himſelf from theſe invisible ſtrokes of Heaven? which will trouble and confound him; and baffle him in all his enterprizes. It is neceſſary then to make a man a throughly good Souldier, that he have firſt conquer'd himſelf. He that would fear nothing, muſt in the firſt place, fear God. Unto which if we would all apply our ſelves, with due ſeriouſneſs, we ſhould have reaſon to expect that *God would remember us* (as my Text ſpeaks) that is own us for his Friends; and *ſave us from our enemies.* Which he can do either by overcoming *them*, or by overcoming their *Enmity* and making them Friends; which is the beſt way of all. For, *When a mans ways pleaſe the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.* XVI. Prov. 7.

III.

This is the laſt part of my Text; of which let me beg your patience, while I give a ſhort account.

It is poſſible indeed that ſucceſs may wait upon the wicked; but as they cannot reaſonably hope for it, ſo they will be in fear and dread, whenſoever they reflect upon their wickedneſs, that at laſt they ſhall miſcarry. Whereas truly good men can never fail to have a good hope in God; that whatſoever ſucceſs they meet withal at preſent, he will not abandon them utterly: but turn even Croſſes to their future advantage. And who ſo happy as he, that lives not in ſuſpence and doubt about the final iſſue of things? but can commit himſelf to God, and to his wiſe Providence, with an aſſured confidence, that it ſhall go well with him at the laſt; though his Faith and Patience be exerciſed a while with dubious, or with adverſe events.

It

It is the Obſervation of *Iſocrates*, * in ſeveral places of his Orations (and he lived almoſt to an hundred years of age, and ſo could the better take notice of the carriage of things in his own Country) that the concluſion of all the Wars in *Greece* were not according to the ſtrength of their Forces, but alſo according to the juſtice of their Cauſe. For though there were different ſucceſſes in the intermediate Acts, which made ſome men doubt which ſide was in the right, yet the *Cataſtrophe* (as they ſpeak) the Concluſion of thoſe tragical Commotions declared the righteous Cauſe Victorious: and they who were unjuſtly oppreſſed, were vindicated into their ancient liberties.

* In Archidamo καὶ τοὺς πολέμους τοὺς προγεγενημένους οὐ κατὰ τὰς δυνάμεις, ἀλλὰ καὶ κατὰ τὸ δίκαιον τέλος ἅπαντας εἰλη φότας.

But however that be, there is no greater truth than what was ſaid by *Caſſius* μεγίστη ἐλπὶς ἐν τοῖς πολέμοις, ἐστὶ τὸ δίκαιον, Nothing gives a man ſuch hope in War, as to have right on his ſide. *God and my right*, is the beſt inſcription that ever was in any *Eſcutcheon*; and the greateſt ſupport of a Chriſtian Prince.

Apud. Anppian.

But of all the ſtories you ever read or heard of, there is none like that which reports the confidence and aſſured hope of *Jehoſhaphat* King of *Judah*, in the firſt Leſſon this day, which I have often mentioned. Where after he had proclaimed a Faſt, and made a moſt admirable Prayer to God (in which he briefly ſets forth theſe two things, *his truſt in God, and the juſtice of his cauſe*) he was ſo mightily incouraged, that he ordained the people to go ſinging, when they went to fight with their numerous enemies. A marvellous confidence in God's Power and Goodneſs; which inſpired them with ſuch hope of ſucceſs, that they ſung their ἐπινίκιον or ſong of triumph beforehand, as you read 2 *Chron.* XX. 21. *When he had conſulted the people, he appointed ſingers unto the LORD, that ſhould praiſe the beau-*

ty

ty of holineſs, as they went out before the army, ſaying, Praiſe the LORD *for his mercy endureth for ever.* They had a Prophet indeed who came and aſſured them of Victory; but they who had none have done the ſame, and it's probable from this example. For *Cedrenus* tells us, that the ancient Chriſtians uſed to ſing in their Battles; as if they would praiſe God for aſſured ſucceſs before the Victory was obtained.

This was the iſſue of a pious Faſt in thoſe old times: and we might ſee the ſame again, did we not merely forſake our food on this day, but likewiſe our ſins. If we would not only humble our ſelves before God to day, but alway walk humbly with him, I might with ſome confidence uſe the words of the Prophet in that place *v.* 17. and ſay, *Stand ye ſtill, and ſee the ſalvation of the* LORD; *fear not, nor be diſmayed, for the* LORD *will be with you.* He will certainly *remember us*, and we ſhall be *ſaved* from the hands of all that hate us.

Not ſo ſpeedily perhaps as we may deſire: but as ſoon as we are fit for the mercies he intends to beſtow upon us: and with ſuch ſpeed as is conſiſtent with the wonted methods of his moſt wiſe proceedings. We expected, I remember, to have ſeen *Ireland* reduced that year his Majeſty went over thither: and thought it very hard that, after ſo much expence, we did not ſee, our enemies elſewhere, humbled the laſt year. But were we a much better people than I can ſuppoſe we are, God might juſtly deferr the accompliſhment of ſuch hopes; and yet be as good as his word here in my Text, and in other places.

Firſt, That he may keep us in a continued dependance upon him; and quicken us to *pray with all prayer, watching thereunto with perſeverance*, and patiently waiting till he have mercy upon us.

Secondly,

Secondly, That he may work in us a through Repentance: Which alas! is very imperfect; and therefore ſo is our Deliverance. Let us compleat the one, and God will finiſh the other. But while our Repentance remains ſo defective; it is rather a wonder that God hath done ſo much, than that he he hath done no more for us. Particularly,

Thirdly, God may juſtly defer to do all that I hope he intends; till we become more ſenſible of what he hath done already. He wrought a mighty deliverance for us not long a go; when we were not able to deliver our ſelves, nor deſerved to be delivered by him. But ſo it is that our angry fits of diſcontent, becauſe we were not delivered in our own method, and after our way, have made us not to take ſufficient Notice of the Deliverance it ſelf; and of that mighty hand of God, which (as we ſing in our daily Hymn, which I wiſh we would mind) *hath ſcattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts*. It is hard to find a greater inſtance of this any where, than here in this Nation: where men that had proudly projected the alteration of the whole frame of our Government, and of our Religion, and in their own opinion had laid their deſign ſo ſtrongly that they thought it could not be defeated; were ſcattered and diſperſed in a moment: and all their towring imaginations confounded, and brought to naught. This was certainly the LORD's doing; which ought to have been marvellous in all our eyes. And when it is, then He will ſtill *work wonderful things for us in righteouſneſs*, as the Prophet ſpeaks: and Crown our deliverance with a Concluſion ſuteable to its Beginning. Beſides all this,

Laſtly, We muſt conſider, that God is not wont to pour out his indignation all at once, even upon thoſe whom he

he intends to deſtroy: But conſumes them by degrees. Whence that remarkable Phraſe very frequent in the Prophets, who are ſaid to *drop*, when they were ſent to denounce God's Judgments againſt a People, XXI. *Ezek.* 2. *Son of man, ſet thy face toward Jeruſalem, and drop toward the holy places*: So it is in the *Hebrew*; which (to make out the ſenſe) we tranſlate, *drop thy word*, and Propheſy againſt the Land of *Iſrael*. The like you read, II. *Micah* 6. where the People ſaid, *Propheſy not to them that propheſy*: In the Hebrew (as the Margin of the Bibles tells you) it is *drop ye not*, &c. Thus *Amos* ſpeaks alſo, VII. 16. *Thou ſayeſt, propheſy not againſt Iſrael, and drop not againſt the houſe of Iſaac.* Upon which words St. *Hierom* hath this pertinent Obſervation, This is the Idiom of the Scripture, *Quod non totam Dei ſimul inferant iram*, &c. becauſe the Prophets do not denounce the whole anger of God at once; but threaten it by little drops.

So patient is the Goodneſs of God, that he doth not preſently ſuffer, *his whole diſpleaſure to ariſe*; but puniſhes thoſe by little and little whom he intends to ruin: That they may have time to repent and ſave their Souls, though they ſhall by no means ſave their Temporal Eſtate. Thus he dealt with all the proud Tyrants of old; with thoſe, for inſtance, of *Niniveh* and *Babylon*. And it may give us ſome account of the Method, wherein it's likely he will proceed againſt the grand Oppreſſors of this Age; particularly him in theſe Weſtern parts of the World. Whoſe Humiliation (which ſo many Nations groan for) is not to be expected, perhaps, by a ſudden pouring of the Vials of God's Wrath upon him, all at once: But drop by drop, as the Prophets ſpeak. Till the time come, that the ſins of that inſolent Nation be ripe: And then God no longer proceeds in this leiſurely Methods but is

wont to pour out his Indignation in larger measures, to a speedy destruction.

If you please, for a conclusion, look into the Prophecy of *Nahum*: Where you will find all this declared more fully, and admirably expressed. He was sent to denounce utter destruction to the *Ninivites*, who had abused the Patience and Goodness of God in the days of *Jonah*; by returning to those wicked works; which for a time they reformed upon his Preaching. Therefore this Prophet tells them from the *LORD*, I. 9. *He will make an utter end, affliction shall not rise up a second time.* That is, one blow should strike them down; and there should be no need of a second to perfect their overthrow.

But hitherto it had been much otherwise, as you may see in the beginning of that Prophecy: Which is very remarkable for the account it gives of the way of the Divine Providence; in the description he makes of the Divine Nature, *v.* 2. *God is Jealous*; that is, he cannot alway endure to behold his Friends oppressed, and his Enemies triumph, but will in due time take Vengeance: as he *three* times repeats it, in the words immediately following, to shew the certainty of it. God is jealous, *and the LORD revengeth*, the LORD *revengeth, and is furious*, (that is, can do it suddenly and easily when he pleases) *the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries; and he reserveth wrath* (till the time proper for it) *for his Enemies. The LORD is slow to anger*, *i. e.* to execute his displeasure; *and great in power*, to do it when he thinks good; *and will not acquit the Wicked*; *i. e.* not suffer them to escape, though he long forbear them. And when he doth come to execute his anger, it is in a terrible manner; after there hath been long forbearance. So it follows, *The LORD hath his way in the Whirlwind, and in the Storm, &c. the mountains quake at him, and the rocks are*

thrown

thrown down by him, &c: with an overflowing flood will he make an utter end of the place thereof, and darkness shall pursue his enemies.

The Prophet, that is, could not tell how to represent the dreadful vengeance God took of those, who had tired his long suffering Goodness, better than by Storms and Hurricans, Deluges and Inundations: which sweep all before them with such an irresistable violence, as is impossible to be opposed. So he concludes, in the very next words, *what do ye imagine against the LORD?* to hinder, that is, the execution of his wrath, and to escape his vengeance. Alas! all your contrivances to avoid the stroke, will prove vain imaginations, foolish devises; when he designs to ruin you. So it follows in the next words, which I read at first, *He will make an utter end; and affliction shall not rise up a second time.* Which he repeats again v. 12. *Though I have afflicted thee* (by various sorts of punishments) *I will afflict thee no more:* But this once, that is; for it shall be a concluding stroke, that shall utterly confound thee.

Thus the Lord did with that *Great King* (as he would needs be called) the King of *Assyria*. And thus, we may rationally expect, he will treat all other haughty Tyrants: who assume to themselves the name of *Great*, only because they are so strong, as to be able to crush their weaker Neighbours. For it still remains true, what the next Prophet saith concerning the *Chaldeans*, who succeeded the *Assyrian Tyrants*, *The LORD is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity*, Hab. i. 13. that is, he cannot approve of the Violence and Cruelty of such Oppressors, *Who deal treacherously* (as it there follows) *and devour the men that are more righteous than themselves.* For how bad soever the *Israelites* were in those times; the *Chaldeans* were much worse. And I hope I may say the same of

of this ſinful Nation, with reſpect to our injurious Neighbours. *Unto whom the Cup of the* LORD*'s right hand ſhall* (at laſt) *be turned: and ſhameful ſpewing ſhall be upon their glory*, II. *Habakk.* 16.

Then let them ſet their cunning wits on work, to imagine and deviſe all the means they can invent, to ſave themſelves from drinking of that Cup, they ſhall not be able to turn it away: but be ſo intoxicated with it, that they ſhall Reel and Stagger, and Stumble at noon day; being unable to ſee the things that belong to their peace. Then ſhall all the fine Politicks of that ſubtile Nation, quite fail them. They ſhall not be able to ſerve themſelves, by any of their wonted Artifices and Illuſions: but only expoſe themſelves the more to ſhame and diſgrace, by truſting to ſuch falſhoods and impoſtures as thoſe, whereby they have long amuſed and deceived many of their Neighbours. *For there is no wiſdom, nor underſtanding, nor counſel againſt the* LORD, XXI. *Prov.* 30. *All whoſe works are truth, and his ways judgment; and thoſe that walk in pride he is able to abaſe*, IV. *Dan. ult.*

For he loveth righteouſneſs: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his ſoul hateth, XI. *Pſal.* 6, 8.

And will preſerve the faithful, and plentifully reward the proud doer, XXXI. *Pſal.* 23.

In which humble confidence, let me conclude as he there doth, *v.* 24. *Be of good courage, and he ſhall ſtrengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the* LORD.

To that great LORD, Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, three perſons and one God, be Glory and Power and Dominion, both now and for evermore. *Amen.*

FINIS.